

## **H.R. 5985, the Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Act of 2016**

H.R. 5985 includes extensions for numerous VA programs and authorities of Alaskan interest, including:

- VA's authority to enter into contracts with non-VA doctors to perform medical disabilities exams for veterans.
- VA's authority to transport certain veterans between VA medical facilities for treatment.
- \$2 million for fiscal 2017 and extend through Dec. 31, 2017, a pilot program for counseling services at retreats for female veterans who have recently left the armed forces.
- A pilot program that provides assistance for child care for certain veterans receiving health care. The bill would authorize \$1.5 million for fiscal 2017.
- A requirement for the VA and [Defense Department](#) to report jointly to Congress on the interoperability of electronic health records between the two departments.
- VA's authority to guarantee the payment of principal and interest on securities connected to certain home loans made to veterans.
- Increase to \$257.7 million, from \$250 million, the annual authorization for comprehensive services programs to assist homeless veterans.
- Supportive services for very low-income veteran families in permanent housing. Current law authorized \$300 million in fiscal 2015 and 2016.
- The Labor Department's homeless veterans' reintegration programs, such as job training, counseling and placement services. Under current law, the program authority ends in fiscal 2016.
- The Homeless Women Veterans' and Homeless Veterans with Children Program, which provides job training, counseling, job placement services and child-care services through the Labor Department.
- VA and Labor Department referrals and counseling services to veterans at risk for homelessness who are transitioning between institutions.
- Extend a grant program through VA Medical Services for homeless veterans with special needs, including those who are women, frail elderly, terminally ill, chronically mentally ill or who care for minor dependents.

- VA's authority to provide outreach and rehabilitation services, care and treatment, therapeutic transitional housing assistance and work therapy to seriously mentally ill and homeless veterans.
- The bill would extend to three years from two years a period that began on Sept. 26, 2014, during which the VA is authorized to pay specified fees to educational institutions or apprenticeship sponsors that participate in a VA educational benefits program. The fees would provide a reimbursement for reporting costs.
- The bill would authorize the VA, during fiscal 2017, to provide \$2 million to disabled veterans invited to compete or train with the U.S. Paralympic Team.
- It would also extend through fiscal 2017 the VA's authority to provide \$8 million in grants for the department's adaptive sports program, which provides funding to organizations to increase opportunities for disabled service members and veterans to participate in regional and national athletic competitions.
- Extend the VA's advisory committees on homeless veterans, veterans' education and minority veterans.
- A requirement for the VA to report to Congress on the disposition of cases in which benefits were delayed or not provided to a veteran because of an administrative error.
- The VA's authority to provide the same rehabilitation and vocational benefits to active-duty service members with severe injuries or illnesses that are provided to veterans.
- The VA's authority to enter into an agreement with the National Academy of Sciences to study the effects of exposure to certain herbicides, such as Agent Orange, during U.S. military operations in Vietnam.

###